



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

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MERRIMACK BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN WORK GROUP

DRAFT MINUTES

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

Planning Board Members Present: Bob Best, Desirea Falt, Alastair Millns and Nelson Disco.

Others Present: Planning and Zoning Administrator Jillian Harris.

1. Call to Order.

Desirea Falt called the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group (Group) meeting to order at 7:32 pm in the Matthew Thornton Meeting Room.

2. NRPC Route 3 Corridor Project Scope.

Jillian Harris gave an overview of the Route 3 Corridor Project Scope, most recently modified by Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) and sent to the Community Development Department on January 22, 2015. She explained that the scope outlines tasks NRPC proposes to provide to the Town for Phase 1 of the project, which include:

- Develop a base map of existing conditions in the corridor using aerial photography and existing GIS layers,
- Conduct a windshield survey of the corridor to verify existing conditions,
- Meet with the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group to review the base map, and,
- Incorporate Work Group comments and finalize the base map.

Nelson Disco questioned what the timeframe would be for completing the project scope and Alastair Millns stated that the timeframe will depend on when they can start and on weather conditions so that sidewalks are clear for assessment. This might make defining a timeframe difficult presently. Nelson Disco questioned whether a document would be included as a final product and Jillian Harris responded it would not, but stated that Task 4 in the project scope included a spreadsheet that lists infrastructure needs in order of priority and details of those needs.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group voted 4-0-0 to approve the NRPC proposal for the Merrimack Route 3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Corridor Plan with direction that the scope include a timeframe for completion, on a motion made by Nelson Disco and seconded by Alastair Millns.

3. Bike Ped Task List Reporting.

Desirea Falt stated that the first task on her list was to arrange a meeting with the Town Manager and the dates that they are looking at are March 4th or 5th at 10:30 AM. Nelson Disco asked what the purpose of the meeting will be and Bob Best responded that the purpose was to discuss the payment-in-lieu questions the group had been discussing last fall. Desirea

1 responded that they would also like to address the best approach to discussing this issue with
2 the Town Council and the NRPC Route 3 Corridor Project Proposal.

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4 Desirea Falt stated that the next task was to develop an online description of the work group
5 and that she was still working on this. The next task is to possibly plan a spring kickoff for
6 community meetings to get input on specific intersections and where sidewalk priorities are.
7 She stated that they had discussed the intersection where the Maple Ridge and Society Hill
8 developments are in the north part of the corridor. Bob Best stated that there are lots of people
9 and places in that area for people to walk to and 7-11 has the only piece of sidewalk. Nelson
10 Disco stated that the Webster Green development across from Saint Gobain was closeby as
11 well. The meetings would be valuable to get community input on where people would go if
12 there were a sidewalk and what they'd like to see in that area. Bob Best stated the need to think
13 about questions that will be posed in these meetings and how many meetings and how often
14 they will be held.

15 Desirea Falt asked Bob Best what feedback he had received from the Merrimack Forum. He
16 responded that he had asked a question on the Merrimack Forum after the last Bike Ped
17 Meeting about what people thought about sidewalks in town. There had been 60 or so
18 comments in return. Responses included thoughts on problem areas, concerns about sidewalk
19 maintenance and costs and 1 response in opposition to sidewalks altogether. A separate
20 question on the forum discussed the town's recent Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
21 Grant award. Discussion had focused on what people think the money should be spent on in
22 town. Nelson Disco explained that the award was given to the town for a specific project and
23 could not be spent on anything other than that project. He gave the group details of how the
24 town applied for and was subsequently awarded the grant for a project in the Town Center
25 Plan. Bob Best stated that it was interesting to hear what people think is important even though
26 the grant is specific to that project.

27 Desirea Falt asked the group how they felt about sidewalks in non-priority areas once the plan
28 is developed. Should they be removed? Bob Best and Nelson Disco replied in the negative, that
29 they would not propose to remove sidewalks ever. Bob Best discussed the winter maintenance
30 issue and details of a court case that basically cleared the notion that all sidewalks must be
31 maintained at all times during the winter. He countered that should the town build sidewalks a
32 plan should be developed for making them useable in the winter though.

33 Desirea Falt asked the group if there were further questions to be asked on the Merrimack
34 Forum. Bob Best stated that they should ask what goes into decisions for priorities, how far
35 would someone walk to a grocery store, or dry cleaner, etc... or would they in the first place?

36 Bob Best continued that they should ask if people would use the path proposed for Watson
37 Park to Wildcat Falls. Nelson Disco responded that he was not sure questions about this trail
38 will produce beneficial information because it's a recreational trail. Alastair Millns stated that
39 they should ask if people want recreational trails or sidewalks that bring you somewhere, like
40 the grocery store.

41 Bob Best stated that they should ask what is the most important reason for a sidewalk or what
42 would they use a sidewalk for?

43 Desirea Falt asked the group to bring more possible questions to ask to the next Bike Ped
44 meeting.

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4. Other Items of Concern.

Jillian Harris stated that Kyle Fox had received some questions on the TAP grant from residents of the Heron Pond Cove neighborhood. They had requested consideration of using some of the grant award to fill a gap in the sidewalk on Manchester Street. Kyle Fox had explained that the grant award was for a specific project and details of that, but referred them to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group as a source for identifying this area as a priority on town sidewalk infrastructure projects. Bob Best discussed the payment-in-lieu provision in the regulations and that it could possibly solve some of these gap problems in town if they can clarify how to apply it correctly. Desirea Falt stated that connecting destinations and nodes should be a priority in filling gaps.

Bob Best stated that the parking issue in making a walkable community needs to be considered even if downtown Manchester, Concord or Nashua is not the goal. He spoke of looking at parking regulations and how that relates to walkability.

Nelson Disco asked if staff had received documents that Nik Coates had discussed at the last meeting and promised to send along. Jillian Harris stated that she had received links to two documents just in the past few days and passed around a hardcopy of each. They included “Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities” by CEO’s for Cities and also “Complete Streets Stimulate the Local Economy” by Smart Growth America. She will send links to the documents electronically.

5. Minutes—January 13, 2015.

The minutes from the January 13, 2015 meeting were approved, as submitted, by a vote of 3-0-1 on a motion made by Nelson Disco and seconded by Bob Best. Alastair Millns abstained.

6. Adjourn.

The February 24, 2015 meeting of the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group was adjourned at 8:34 PM, by a vote of 4-0-0.

The next meeting of the Merrimack Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Work Group will be March 10, 2015 at 7:30 PM in the Matthew Thornton Meeting Room.

Task List:

1. Desirea to confirm scheduled meeting with Town Manager, Eileen Cabanel.
2. Jillian to send links to documents from Nik Coates.
3. Jillian to confirm NRPC proposal with timeline.
4. All members to bring community input questions to the next Meeting.